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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER

**TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 371**

449122020200

U.S. APPLICATION NO (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5)

10/019064
Not yet assigned

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO

INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE

PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED

PCT/DE00/02102

June 28, 2000

June 29, 1999

TITLE OF INVENTION

PROCESSING A REQUEST TO AN OPERATOR SERVICE

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US

Christian HAVLIS et al.

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

1. ☒ This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371
2. ☐ This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371
3. ☐ This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)). The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (21) indicated below
4. ☒ The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (PCT Article 31)
5. ☒ A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. ☒ is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☒ has been communicated by the International Bureau
 - c. ☐ is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
6. ☒ An English language translation of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. ☒ is attached hereto
 - b. ☒ has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4).
7. ☐ Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
 - a. ☐ are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☐ have been communicated by the International Bureau
 - c. ☐ have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. ☐ have not been made and will not be made
8. ☐ An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. ☐ An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)).
10. ☐ An English language translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

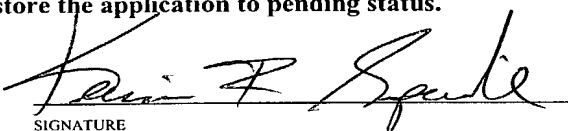
Items 11. to 16. below concern document(s) or information included:

11. ☒ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. ☐ An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. ☐ A **FIRST** preliminary amendment.
14. ☐ A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment.
15. ☐ A substitute specification.
16. ☐ A change of power of attorney and/or address letter
17. ☐ A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter.2 and 35 U.S.C. 1.821 - 1.825
18. ☐ A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4)
19. ☐ A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. 154(d)(4)
20. ☒ Other items or information 1) Application Data Sheet; 2) Int'l Search Report; 3) IPER; 4) Return receipt postcard.

CERTIFICATE OF HAND DELIVERY

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being hand filed with the United States Patent and Trademark Office in Washington, D.C. on December 27, 2001.

Melissa Garton
Melissa Garton

U.S. APPLICATION NO (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5) Not yet assigned 10/019064		INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO PCT/DE00/02102		ATTORNEY DOCKET NO 449122020200	
21. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted: BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)): Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO.....\$1,000.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO.....\$860.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO.....\$710.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provision of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)\$690.00 International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4)\$100.00				CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY	
ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =				\$860.00	
Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).				\$0	
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE		
Total claims	- 20 =		x \$18.00	\$0	
Independent claims	- 3 =		x \$80.00	\$0	
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)			+ \$270.00	\$0	
TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =				\$860.00	
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27. The fees indicated above are reduced by 1/2.				\$0	
SUBTOTAL =				\$0	
Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).				+	\$0
TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =				\$0	
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property				+	\$0
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =				\$860.00	
				Amount to be refunded:	\$
				charged:	\$
a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. 03-1952 (referencing Docket No. 44912-20202.00) in the amount of \$860.00 to cover the above fees. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed: b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 (referencing Docket No. 44912-20202.00).					
NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.					
SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: Kevin R. Spivak Morrison & Foerster LLP 2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20006-1888					
<div style="text-align: center;">  SIGNATURE </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Kevin R. Spivak Registration No. 43,148 </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> December 27, 2001 </div>					

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06 MAY 2002

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CERTIFICATE OF HAND DELIVERY

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being hand filed with the United States Patent and Trademark Office in Washington, D.C. on May 6, 2002.

Melissa Garton
Melissa Garton

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In the application of:

Christian HAVLIS et al.

Serial No.: 10/019,064

Filing Date: December 27, 2001

For: PROCESSING A REQUEST TO AN
OPERATOR SERVICE

Examiner: Not yet assigned

Group Art Unit: Not yet assigned

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

BOX PCT

Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to examination on the merits, please amend this application as follows:

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 & 2.

What is claimed is:

3. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, if it is above a predetermined lower threshold value, the call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is arranged in sequence in the waiting field.
4. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, if

it is below a predetermined upper threshold value, the call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is denied.

5. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein before terminating the request or the connection, service-specific instructions are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.
6. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions about the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and a the call-back entry is generated if the instructions include consent of the calling subscriber to a call-back connection.
7. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the instructions of the calling subscriber are taken in a voice-controlled dialog.
8. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the at least one entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it.
9. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein the instructions originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are used when generating the call-back entry and, when taking an entry, those entries which include the free operator in their operator selection are considered.
10. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein at least one of those entries for which the remaining waiting time is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value is taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection is initiated.
11. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein the information indicating that an operator or a connection line has become free is transmitted in the direction of the calling subscriber with the aid of the Transaction Capabilities Part Protocol (TCAP), on the

basis of the Signaling System No. 7, the initiation of the call-back connection taking place on the side of the calling subscriber.

12. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22, wherein the operator service is formed by a number of subscriber lines arranged in the telecommunication network and combined to form a subscriber group.

13. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the subscriber group is connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or connection channels to the telecommunication network.

Please add new claims 14-25 as follows:

14. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, if it is above a predetermined lower threshold value, the call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is arranged in sequence in the waiting field.

15. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, if it is below a predetermined upper threshold value, the call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is denied.

16. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein before terminating the request or the connection, service-specific instructions are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.

17. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions about the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and the call-back entry is generated if the instructions include consent of the calling subscriber to a call-back connection.

18. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting

field, the information of the at least one entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it.

19. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the instructions originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are used when generating the call-back entry and, when taking an entry, those entries which include the free operator in their operator selection are considered.

20. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at least one of those entries for which the remaining waiting time is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value is taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection is initiated.

21. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the information indicating that an operator or a connection line has become free is transmitted in the direction of the calling subscriber with the aid of the Transaction Capabilities Part Protocol (TCAP), on the basis of the Signaling System No. 7, the initiation of the call-back connection taking place on the side of the calling subscriber.

22. (New) A method of processing requests directed to an operator service of a telecommunication network when the network operators are unavailable, comprising:
generating an entry as a call-back entry with information which includes at least one of a call address concerning a calling subscriber and information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, one of the requests or a connection arising from the calling subscriber being terminated; and
establishing a call-back connection between the calling subscriber specified by the call address and an operator or a connection line when an operator or a connection line becomes free, on the basis of the information of the at least one entry wherein at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field.

23. (New) A method of processing requests directed to an operator service of a telecommunication network when the network operators are unavailable, comprising:
generating an entry as a call-back entry with information which includes at least one of a call address concerning a calling subscriber and information representing the calling

subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the requests or a connection arising from the calling subscriber being terminated; and

establishing the call-back connection between the calling subscriber and an operator or a connection line, wherein at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection directed at the subscriber specified by the call address is initiated and is maintained.

24. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein the request for connection from a calling subscriber of the network for the operator service, the operator service being assigned a predetermined number of operators and/or connection lines, in which a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if the suitable operators or connection lines for the request are busy.

25. (New) The method of claim 23 wherein the request for connection from a calling subscriber of the network for the operator service, the operator service being assigned a predetermined number of operators and/or connection lines, in which a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if the suitable operators or connection lines for the request are busy.

In the Abstract:

Please replace the Abstract with the substitute Abstract attached hereto.

REMARKS

Amendments to the specification have been made and are submitted herewith in the attached Substitute Specification. A clean copy of the specification and a marked-up version showing the changes made are attached herewith. The claims and abstract have been amended in the attached Preliminary Amendment. All amendments have been made to place the application in proper U.S. format and to conform with proper grammatical and idiomatic English. None of the amendments herein are made for reasons related to patentability. No new matter has been added.

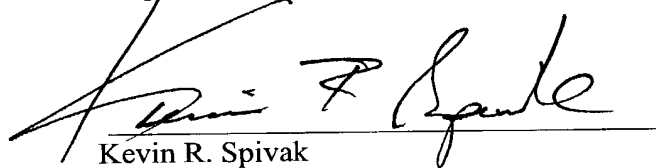
Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version with markings to show changes made**".

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. 449122020200. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated:

May 6, 2002



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

For the convenience of the Examiner, the changes made are shown below with deleted text in strikethrough and added text in underline.

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1 & 2.

Patent claims What is claimed is:

3. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 22 ~~1 or 2~~, characterized in that, **wherein** at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, ~~provided that~~ **if** it lies **is** above a ~~predeterminable~~ **predetermined** lower threshold value(~~t1~~), a **the** call-back entry (~~RRE~~) is generated, otherwise the request (~~WTE~~) is arranged in sequence in the waiting field.

4. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 3~~, characterized in that, **claim 22, wherein** at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, ~~provided that~~ **if** it lies **is** below a ~~predeterminable~~ **predetermined** upper threshold value(~~t2~~), a **the** call-back entry (~~RRE~~) is generated, otherwise the request is denied.

5. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 4~~, characterized in that, **claim 22, wherein** before terminating the request or the connection arising from it, service-specific instructions (~~opw, dat~~) are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.

6. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 5~~, characterized in that, **claim 22, wherein** at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions ~~concerning~~ **about** the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and a **the** call-back entry (~~RRE~~) is ~~only~~ generated if ~~these~~ **the** instructions include consent of the **calling** subscriber to a call-back connection.

7. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 5 or 6, characterized in that, wherein the instructions of the calling subscriber are taken in a voice-controlled dialog.

8. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 7~~, characterized in that, claim 22, wherein when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the at least one entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it.

9. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of claims 1 to 8~~, characterized in that claim 22, wherein the instructions (~~opw~~) originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are used when generating the call-back entry (RRE), and in that and, when taking an entry, ~~only~~ those entries (~~ent~~) which include the free operator in their operator selection are considered.

10. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that claim 22, wherein at least one of those entries for which the ~~still~~ remaining waiting time in the waiting field is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value, ~~or a predeterminable waiting time~~, is taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection is initiated.

11. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that the information representing claim 22, wherein the information indicating that an operator or a connection line has become free is transmitted in the direction of the ~~specified~~ calling subscriber with the aid of the Transaction Capabilities Part Protocol (TCAP), on the basis of the Signaling System No. 7, the initiation of the call-back connection taking place on the side of the ~~specified~~ calling subscriber.

12. (Amended) The method as claimed in ~~one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that claim 22, wherein the operator service is formed by a number of subscriber lines arranged in the telecommunication network and combined to form a subscriber group.

13. (Amended) The method as claimed in claim 12, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the subscriber group is connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or connection channels to the telecommunication network.

Please add new claims 14-25 as follows:

14. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, if it is above a predetermined lower threshold value, the call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is arranged in sequence in the waiting field.
15. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, if it is below a predetermined upper threshold value, the call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is denied.
16. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein before terminating the request or the connection, service-specific instructions are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.
17. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions about the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and the call-back entry is generated if the instructions include consent of the calling subscriber to a call-back connection.
18. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the at least one entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it.
19. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the instructions originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are used when generating the call-back entry and, when taking an entry, those entries which include the free operator in their operator selection are considered.

20. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein at least one of those entries for which the remaining waiting time is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value is taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection is initiated.
21. (New) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the information indicating that an operator or a connection line has become free is transmitted in the direction of the calling subscriber with the aid of the Transaction Capabilities Part Protocol (TCAP), on the basis of the Signaling System No. 7, the initiation of the call-back connection taking place on the side of the calling subscriber.
22. (New) A method of processing requests directed to an operator service of a telecommunication network when the network operators are unavailable, comprising:
generating an entry as a call-back entry with information which includes at least one of a call address concerning a calling subscriber and information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, one of the requests or a connection arising from the calling subscriber being terminated; and
establishing a call-back connection between the calling subscriber specified by the call address and an operator or a connection line when an operator or a connection line becomes free, on the basis of the information of the at least one entry wherein at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field.
23. (New) A method of processing requests directed to an operator service of a telecommunication network when the network operators are unavailable, comprising:
generating an entry as a call-back entry with information which includes at least one of a call address concerning a calling subscriber and information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the requests or a connection arising from the calling subscriber being terminated; and
establishing the call-back connection between the calling subscriber and an operator or a connection line, wherein at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection directed at the subscriber specified by the call address is initiated and is maintained.

24. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein the request for connection from a calling subscriber of the network for the operator service, the operator service being assigned a predetermined number of operators and/or connection lines, in which a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if the suitable operators or connection lines for the request are busy.

25. (New) The method of claim 23 wherein the request for connection from a calling subscriber of the network for the operator service, the operator service being assigned a predetermined number of operators and/or connection lines, in which a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if the suitable operators or connection lines for the request are busy.

In the Abstract:

Please replace the Abstract with the substitute Abstract attached hereto.

PROCESSING A REQUEST TO AN OPERATOR SERVICE**ABSTRACT**

In the event that operators or connection lines of an operator service of a telecommunication network are busy when a subscriber request (call) is made to said service, a call-back entry (RRE) with information including a call address (trn) of the subscriber is generated and arranged in sequence in a waiting field (WFD). The request or the associated connection is terminated. When an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries (ent, ent') in the waiting field is taken and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection is established between the subscriber and the free operator.

PROCESSING A REQUEST TO AN OPERATOR SERVICE

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

- 5 This application claims priority to International Application No. PCT/DE00/02102 which was filed in the German language on January 4, 2001.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF INVENTION

- 10 The invention relates to a method of processing requests directed to an operator service of a telecommunication network, and in particular, which are received in the form of a request for connection from a calling subscriber of the network for the operator
15 service.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- In telecommunication networks, what are known as operator services are typically provided. These
20 services often represent an important link between the customers of the network and the network operators. The tasks of such an operator service are many and varied. A main task, for example, is to provide the subscribers with information on request. A subscriber
25 wishing to use an operator service requests the setting up of a connection to the operator service, for example in a telephone network in the form of a call by means of a service number assigned to the operator service. On the part of the operator service, the request for
30 connection is accepted and the desired service is provided for the calling subscriber.

- Also known in current communication networks or telephone networks, along with the connection of
35 private branch exchanges to public exchanges, is the interconnection of a number of subscriber lines, arranged in the telephone network to form a subscriber group, for example performing the function of an

For example, a subscriber may call an operator service in an ISDN network in order to request information and a connection concerning another subscriber. The subscriber is assigned to a free operator and obtains from the latter the requested service, for example the desired information. The responsible operator can then, if necessary, access a database for example, the operator then being provided on the screen of his PC with information concerning the other subscriber. If also desired, the operator can set up a connection with the desired subscriber and put the latter through to the calling subscriber. The example just described is intended to represent only one of the possibilities or tasks of an operator service.

A system for carrying out an operator service comprises not only a central control system but also the assigned operators. The control system and the operators are usually stationed at 'call centers', and their respective equipment, comprising a terminal, PC, screen etc. and referred to usually and hereafter as a "console", is directly connected or configured for connection to the system. For example, a call center may be established as part of one of the applicant's EWSD switching systems, the operators being connected as network subscribers. Another known embodiment of a call center is set up for example in the central

station of a branch exchange, the operators or the subscribers assigned to the operator service being reachable via extensions. The branch exchanges are connected via a predetermined number of connection
5 lines or transmission channels to the higher-level or public communication network.

Since the number of operators of a given operator service is limited, typically for reasons of economy,
10 there is often the situation - at peak times - that all the available operators are already busy attending to calling subscribers. Consequently, when another subscriber calls for the operator service, no operator is free to take the call. Since in such a case the
15 request is usually not handled like a request for connection to a busy line - that is rejection with a busy signal of the telecommunication network - a waiting procedure is provided for the request received.

20 A conventional method for a waiting procedure, in particular in the case of telephone services, consists of the request or the call being made to wait on-line; the calls waiting on-line are taken by operators one after the other. The calling subscriber must remain on
25 the phone for the entire time until his call is taken. Owing to long waiting times, the call is often terminated prematurely by the often irritated subscriber. This may lead to a lack of acceptance of the service and, as a consequence, to actual
30 dissatisfaction on the part of the customers with the operator of the service.

Another solution is to reduce the waiting time at especially busy times by assigning additional operators
35 to the service. However, apart from the associated administrative effort, this solution requires an adequately large number of operator personnel to be available.

Within current telephone networks, the signaling for setting up and clearing down 64 kbit user information connections for controlling ISDN services takes place
 5 on the basis of the ITU-T Signaling System No. 7 - also referred to as SS No. 7.

The actual task of the Signaling System No. 7 is to exchange signaling messages within the communication
 10 networks. The signaling messages are exchanged by the user parts within the reference model. According to the type of signaling messages, a distinction is made, for example, between the Telephone User Part - TUP -, the Data User Part - DUP -, the ISDN User Part - ISUP -
 15 and the Broadband ISDN User Part - B-ISUP. The TUP was implemented as the first application in the Signaling System No. 7. Building on the TUP, the ISUP was defined for generally establishing the ISDN and for establishing the signaling within the ISDN. The ISUP
 20 gave rise to the latest application of the B-ISUP for applications within ATM-based networks. The main tasks of the ISUP are:

- setting up and clearing down user information
 25 connections,
- performing the signaling for service attributes,
- coupling two "logical" signaling connections (for example at the transition from the national network to the international network).

30

The ISDN user part directly uses the Message Transfer Part - MTP - and the Signaling Connection and Control Part - SCCP, layer 4; the ISUP itself is consequently to be classified as belonging to layers 4 to 7 in the
 35 OSI reference model. The ISDN user part controls both the link-by-link signaling to reach the destination and the end-to-end signaling relationship between the originating exchange and the destination exchange.

With the aid of the link-by-link signaling, the path for the user information connection and the signaling connection is sought and, after corresponding commands, is set up. The MTP is used for this purpose. For the

5 user information connection, all the involved exchanges must be informed, for example by switching through the user information channel, while only the originating and destination exchanges exchange signaling information for the control of the service attributes.

10 For the end-to-end signaling, the ISUP uses the services of the SCCP. In the ISDN user part, the actual signaling information is exchanged. All the lower-level layers ensure that this information is transmitted in an acknowledged form and reaches the

15 addressed user part. For the exchange of the end-to-end signaling messages for handling ISDN service attributes, the end-to-end signaling of the SCCP is used, based on a TCAP dialog.

20 For more complex applications within communication networks, such as for example for supporting database inquiries pertaining to services of the Intelligent Network - also referred to as IN - or in the case of mobile radio applications, the Transaction Capabilities

25 Application Part - TCAP - was introduced into the Signaling System No. 7. For example, with the freephone service of the Intelligent Network, the initiator of the connection dials an IN call number (0130 or 0800), which, by calling up the Intelligent

30 Network, determines a destination call number on the basis of the customer parameters. For determining the valid destination call number, only signaling messages have to be exchanged; the user information channel is not connected to the IN. This service call is an

35 example of a typical TCAP application. In the communication of TCAP entities, a distinction is made between structured dialog and unstructured dialog. In the case of structured transport, before messages are

exchanged, a transaction relationship is initiated and the transaction code - also referred to as the transaction ID - is allocated in both communication devices of the two signaling nodes involved for the identification of this relationship. After a BEGIN message, in the structured dialog the individual information is transferred with CONTINUE messages. The BEGIN message contains the transaction code of the initiator, the CONTINUE messages contain, depending on the direction of transmission, the code of the initiator or the code of the communication partner as the originating code and the code of the communication partner as the destination code. Once the information has been transmitted, the dialog is ended in the normal way by the END message. Structured dialog is used for example for database inquiries, such as for example in the mobile radio networks or in the IN; all exchanged messages can be identified as belonging to this activity by the transaction code.

20

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention discloses a waiting procedure in which, with reasonable expenditure and also with a predetermined number of operators, the waiting time of calling subscribers is passed in a more acceptable way than in the case of the known methods.

The invention is achieved in one embodiment by a method in which the waiting procedure to which a request is subjected is carried out according to the invention as follows:

an entry is generated as a call-back entry with information which contains a call address concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the request or a connection arising from it being terminated, and when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first

entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the at least one entry, a call-back connection is established between the subscriber specified by the call address
5 and the free operator or the free connection line.

The calling subscriber can leave his request to use the service without having to "hang on" during the entire waiting time. In addition, the call charges which
10 would arise during this waiting time do not apply.

According to another embodiment of the method according to the invention, the waiting procedure is carried out as follows:

15 An entry is generated as a call-back entry with information which contains a call address concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the request or a connection arising from
20 it being terminated.

At least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection
25 directed at the subscriber specified by the call address is initiated and is possibly maintained. Subsequently, the call-back connection is established between the specified subscriber and a free subscriber or a free connection line. In this implementational
30 variant, possibly occurring waiting times for the operators are avoided, since the waiting subscriber is called back already before an operator actually becomes free and, if need be, is connected to an announcement. When a suitable operator becomes free, the already
35 called-back subscriber is immediately put through.

In still another embodiment of the invention, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined

and, provided that it lies above a predeterminable lower threshold value, a call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is arranged in sequence in the waiting field. This avoids the generation of a call-back in the case of short waiting times, when the subscriber is quite willing to wait.

In addition if, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, provided that it lies below a predeterminable upper threshold value, a call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is denied. This procedure is useful wherever the waiting time would become so great, for example several hours, that waiting for the call-back would presumably be onerous or pointless for the subscriber.

It is preferable if, before terminating the request or the connection arising from it, service-specific instructions are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.

Service-specific instructions may in this case be, for example, the selection of an operator group, such as for example for a subservice (for example division of the foreign information service into subservices corresponding to geographical areas); they may concern special service features, such as for example a language desired by the subscriber for the services provided or a customer number of the calling subscriber, which could be used for example in the selection of an operator. The instructions may have been provided by the subscriber in a connection arising from the request, for example in an automated inquiry or as a suffix of the service call number dialed by the subscriber.

Furthermore, it is preferable if, at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions concerning the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and a call-back entry is only
5 generated if these instructions include consent of the subscriber to a call-back connection.

At the same time, to increase operating convenience, it is preferable if the instructions of the calling
10 subscriber are taken in a voice-controlled dialog.

In yet another embodiment of the invention, more flexible handling of the call-back can be achieved if, when an operator becomes free, the first entry in the
15 waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it. The operator may initiate the call-back by
20 pressing a button for example, whereupon the call-back connection is established, or the call-back connection is produced automatically by the console, without confirmation by the operator.

25 The instructions originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are additionally used when generating the call-back entry, and, when taking an entry, those entries which include the free operator in their operator selection are
30 considered. The instructions may be taken from the subscriber, for example as mentioned further above, or have been provided as a suffix of the call number dialed by the subscriber.

35 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention together with further benefits is explained in more detail below on the basis of a non-restrictive exemplary embodiment, which concerns an

operator service of a fixed telephone network. Used as a basis for this explanation are the attached figures, which show schematic representations and in which:

- 5 Figure 1 shows the switching system for carrying out the operator service with the assigned operators.

Figure 2 shows the waiting field of the operator service.

10

Figure 3 shows a flow diagram of the generation of an entry of the waiting field.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

- 15 An exemplary switching system OPS is shown in figure 1, on which the operator service is operated. The consoles of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 assigned to the operator service OPS and the network subscribers TN1, TN2, ..., TNx are connected into the fixed telephone
20 network via subscriber lines and line trunk groups (not represented in the drawing), for example connected as shown to the switching unit KPN of the exchange. In the example, three operators are assigned to the operator service. Of course, there may be any desired
25 number of operators. Provided for controlling the switching system OPS is a coordination processor COP, which also undertakes the assignment to the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 of the subscribers TNx calling with a service request.

30

- A subscriber TNx wishing to use the operator service OPS requests this service by dialing a service call number which is assigned in the telephone network to the operator service. The request for connection
35 received by the operator service consequently represents a service request. If one of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 is free, the request is answered by the

request for connection being put through by the coordination processor COP to the free operator.

However, for purposes of this example, it will be
5 assumed that all the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 are busy attending to service requests from subscribers - not shown in figure 1. Further service requests therefore cannot be handled immediately. Instead, they are subjected to a waiting procedure by the coordination
10 processor COP. In known systems, for example, a recording, for example with the announcement "please wait", is played to the subscriber, and the request concerned is arranged in sequence in a waiting field WFD, usually at the end of the line created by the
15 waiting field WFD. When an operator becomes free, the first request is taken from the waiting field and the subscriber is connected to the free operator.

According to the invention, it is provided that the
20 waiting procedure is carried out on the basis of a request from a subscriber TNx for a (currently) busy operator service OPS as follows: an entry which is generated from call-relevant data of the subscriber TNx is arranged in sequence in the waiting field and the
25 request for connection of the subscriber is terminated. The service request is answered by a separate call-back, which is initiated from the operator system when an operator becomes free on the basis of the call-relevant data in the first entry.

30

Figure 2 shows by way of example a waiting field WFD according to the invention with several entries, which are also referred to hereafter as call-back entries RRE. In the example shown, a call-back entry in each
35 case includes a call number trn of the subscriber, from the service request of which the call-back entry originates. The call number trn serves as a call address when the subscriber is called back. A second

field opw of the entry designates a selection of the desired operators, for example for a desired language, for special subservices or the like. For the sake of simplicity, in figure 2 the operator selections opw in the entries are symbolized by figures, which relate to the number of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3. Additional information data included in an entry concerns additional data which have been provided by the subscriber on the basis of the operator service used.

10

Referring to the flow diagram of figure 3, if a request received by the operator service OPS as a result of a call of a subscriber TNx cannot be answered because the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 are busy, an automated dialog is first conducted with the subscriber, asking the calling subscriber to give service-specific instructions, for example for a subservice desired by the subscriber or desired service features, such as for instance a preferred language. The instructions are stored in a data field dat when an entry is generated and/or used for determining an operator selection opw, which indicates which of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 is to answer the entry.

20

The anticipated waiting time before an answer can be given is then determined. This waiting time is determined by a predetermined method of a known type, for example on the basis of how busy the operator service is, in particular the number of requests waiting, and the processing time of previous service requests. If the anticipated waiting time lies below a predeterminable lower threshold value, for example below 2 minutes, the request is held in the known way as a waiting entry WTE in the waiting line, the calling subscriber TNx being informed by means of an automated announcement that his call will be dealt with shortly.

30

35

If, however, the anticipated waiting time exceeds the threshold value, a waiting procedure by means of a call-back takes place. A call-back entry RRE is generated using the call number tnx of the subscriber
5 TNx and arranged in sequence in the waiting field WFD. The subscriber then receives an automated announcement that his request has been registered and he will be called back. Preferably, he may be additionally informed of the anticipated waiting time. The
10 connection is subsequently terminated.

The arrangement in sequence rrrh of the call-back entry generally takes place at the end of the waiting field. In special cases, an entry may also be arranged at some
15 other position in the sequence, the position being determined for example on the basis of the subscriber data and the existing entries of the waiting list. For example, it could be provided that a specific group of callers is given preferential treatment and their
20 requests or call-back entries are therefore arranged in sequence ahead of entries of other callers.

In addition to or instead of the already mentioned lower threshold value t1, a second, upper threshold
25 value t2 may be provided. If the anticipated waiting time lies above the upper threshold value t2, for example over 3 hours, incoming service requests are denied, for example with an announcement which informs the subscriber that the service is busy and asks him to
30 call back at a later time, and the creation of an entry for the waiting field does not occur.

In a variant (not represented in figure 3) of the invention, the decision with respect to the type of
35 waiting procedure can be left to the calling subscriber. For example, the subscriber is informed in a voice-controlled dialog of the position in which he would be waiting in line and/or the probable waiting

time and is given the option of waiting in line, being called back or ending the call without any further action.

- 5 If one of the operators of the service OPS becomes free, for example the operator OP3, a suitable entry is taken from the waiting field WFD and answered. It may, for example, always be the first entry in the waiting field that is taken ent (figure 2). The waiting field
- 10 WFD is advantageously searched through, beginning from the first position, for an entry which includes the free operator in its operator selection opw, and this entry is taken and used as a basis for the answer ent'.
- 15 In this example, the first entry with an operator selection which includes the operator OP3 (represented in figure 2 by the figure assigned to this operator, that is 3) is that entry with the call number tn3 of the subscriber TN3. (It is coincidental that the
- 20 number of the operator is the same as that of the subscriber.) This entry is then taken from the waiting field and the information of the entry is supplied to the free operator OP3. On the basis of this information, the operator calls the subscriber TN3
- 25 back, for example by pressing a button on the console, whereby the establishment of a connection is initiated in a known way, and in this way offers the subscriber the desired service. In a variant, the call-back connection may be established automatically by the
- 30 operator console and provided to the operator together with the information of the call-back entry.

To avoid waiting times for the operators, not only the entry position which is first in the waiting field but

35 also the penultimate entry or a number of entries positioned first in the waiting field are advantageously taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection set up for each of them. Those entries

for which the still remaining waiting time within the waiting procedure is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value, or a predetermined waiting time, are advantageously taken from the waiting
 5 field. The called-back subscribers are, for example, played an appropriate announcement, by which the end of the waiting procedure is indicated and the subscriber is switched through as soon as possible to the desired operator or subscriber.

10

The initiation according to the invention of a call-back connection to a specified subscriber as part of a waiting procedure provided in relation to an operator service represents in principle an advantageous
 15 development of the ISDN-specific "Call Completion on Busy Subscriber" service feature - also referred to as "CCBS" - specified according to the ETSI standard - cf. ETS 300 357 -, which however can be used for one subscriber line in each case.

20

The "Call Completion on Busy Subscriber" service feature is one of the most complex service features within ISDN-specific telephone networks. In the case of this service feature, a calling subscriber
 25 encountering a busy B subscriber line can have an automatic call-back initiated by the network when this subscriber is free again. In signaling terms, the unsuccessful connection to the B subscriber is initially terminated. In the destination exchange, the
 30 call-back request is then entered, it being determined by the destination exchange when the B subscriber is free again or has the free status. The determination of the free status can be achieved for example by regularly checking the switching status of the B
 35 subscriber. Alternatively, the transition of the subscriber status from "busy" to "free" may be selected or set as the triggering criterion for the initiation of the call-back. When the free status of the B

subscriber is established, it is firstly checked whether the A subscriber is likewise free, then the latter is called and after that a connection to the B subscriber is set up. The handling of the service
5 feature - i.e. the checking of the B subscriber and the notification of the A subscriber - takes place as an end-to-end signaling between the two subscriber exchanges. The control of the service feature is supported for this on the SCCP end-to-end signaling
10 connections and uses a TCAP-based dialog for the exchange of the end-to-end signaling data.

The method according to the invention represents a further development of the CCBS standard, the same
15 procedures as CCBS being used for the signaling of the call-back information from the B subscriber to the A subscriber - i.e. the setting up of SCCP end-to-end signaling connections and exchange of end-to-end signaling data by means of TCAP dialog. By contrast
20 with CCBS, other triggering criteria can be used in the case of the method according to the invention. With the aid of the method according to the invention, call-back connections can be created as part of a waiting procedure, it being possible to use for example the
25 finding that the waiting time within a waiting line is less than expected as a triggering criterion for the initiation of a call-back connection. A service feature created in this way, i.e. initiation of a call-back to a specified subscriber if a waiting time is
30 less than that predetermined, can also be referred to as "Call Completion on Dequeuing" or "CCDQ".

The method according to the invention may be used advantageously in the case of subscriber lines or
35 connection lines arranged network-wide within a telephone network and combined to form a subscriber group. The subscriber group may be connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or

transmission channels - for example via a private
branch exchange - to the public telecommunication
network.

~~Description~~

PROCESSING A REQUEST TO AN OPERATOR SERVICE

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

5 This application claims priority to International
Application No. PCT/DE00/02102 which was filed in the
German language on January 4, 2001.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF INVENTION

10 The invention relates to a method of processing requests directed to an operator service of a telecommunication network, and in particular, which are respectively received in the form of a request for connection from a calling subscriber of the network for
15 the operator service, ~~the operator service being assigned a predetermined number of operators and/or connection lines, in which method a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if all the suitable operators or~~
20 ~~connection lines for this request are busy.~~

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In telecommunication networks, ~~in particular in telephone networks,~~ what are known as operator services are typically provided. These services often ~~representing~~ represent an important link between the customers of the network and the network operators. The tasks of such an operator service are many and varied; ~~a.~~ A main task, for example, is to provide the subscribers with information on request. A subscriber wishing to use an operator service requests ~~in the telecommunication network concerned~~ the setting up of a connection to the operator service, for example in a telephone network in the form of a call by means of a service number assigned to the operator service; ~~on.~~ On the part of the operator service, the request for connection is accepted and the desired service is provided for the calling subscriber.

Also known in current communication networks or telephone networks, along with the connection of private branch exchanges to public exchanges, is the interconnection of a number of subscriber lines arranged ~~int~~ in the telephone network to form a subscriber group, for example performing the function of an operator service - also known as a "hunting group". A hunting group is assigned a group call number or pilot call number, which is shared by all of the interconnected subscriber lines, ~~and, after.~~ After it has been dialed - for example for the setting up of a communication link to one of the communication devices assigned to the group - a free subscriber line within the group is determined with the aid of a defined search method - also referred to as a "hunting algorithm" - for setting up the connection.

For example, a subscriber may call an operator service in an ISDN network in order to request information and a connection concerning another subscriber. The subscriber is assigned to a free operator and obtains from the latter the requested service, for example the desired information. The responsible operator can then, if necessary, access a database for example, the operator then being provided on the screen of his PC with information concerning the other subscriber. If also desired, the operator can set up a connection with the desired subscriber and put the latter through to the calling subscriber. The example just described is intended to represent only one of the possibilities or tasks of an operator service.

A system for carrying out an operator service comprises not only a central control system but also the assigned operators. The control system and the operators are usually stationed at 'call centers', ~~as they are known,~~ and their respective equipment, comprising a

terminal, PC, screen etc. and referred to usually and hereafter as a "console", is directly connected or configured for connection to the system, ~~or can be connected to it~~.

5 established as part of one of the applicant's EWSD switching systems, the operators being connected as network subscribers. Another known ~~embedments~~ embodiment of a call center is set up for example in the central station of a branch exchange, the operators
10 or the subscribers assigned to the operator service being reachable via extensions. The branch exchanges are connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or transmission channels to the higher-level or public communication network.

15

Since the number of operators of a given operator service is limited, ~~in particular~~ typically for reasons of economy, there is often the situation - ~~in particular~~ at peak times - that all the available
20 operators are already busy attending to calling subscribers ~~and consequently,~~ Consequently, when a further another subscriber calls for the operator service, no operator is free to take the call. Since in such a case the request is usually not ~~to be~~ handled
25 like a request for connection to a busy line - that is rejection with a busy signal of the telecommunication network - a waiting procedure is provided for the request received.

30 A ~~known and widely customary~~ conventional method for a waiting procedure, in particular in the case of telephone services, consists ~~in that~~ of the request or the call ~~is being~~ made to wait ~~in~~ on-line; the calls waiting ~~in~~ on-line are taken by operators one after the
35 other. The calling subscriber must remain on the phone for the entire time until his call is taken. Owing to long waiting times, the call is often terminated prematurely by the ~~-often~~ often irritated ~~-subscriber, this.~~

This may lead to a lack of acceptance of the service and, as a consequence, to actual dissatisfaction on the part of the customers with the operator of the service.

- 5 Another attempted solution is to reduce the waiting time at especially busy times by assigning further additional operators to the service ~~concerned for a short time~~. However, apart from the associated administrative effort, this solution requires in principle ~~that~~ an adequately large number of operator personnel are to be available.
- 10

Within current telephone networks, the signaling for setting up and clearing down 64 kbit user information connections for controlling ISDN services takes place on the basis of the ITU-T Signaling System No. 7 - also referred to as SS No. 7.

15

The actual task of the Signaling System No. 7 is to exchange signaling messages within the communication networks. The signaling messages are exchanged by the user parts within the reference model. According to the type of signaling messages, a distinction is made, for example, between the Telephone User Part - TUP -, the Data User Part - DUP -, the ISDN User Part - ISUP - and the Broadband ISDN User Part - B-ISUP. The TUP was implemented as the first application in the Signaling System No. 7. Building on the TUP, the ISUP was defined for generally establishing the ISDN and for establishing the signaling within the ISDN. The ISUP gave rise to the latest application of the B-ISUP for applications within ATM-based networks. The main tasks of the ISUP are:

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- 35 - setting up and clearing down user information connections,
- performing the signaling for service attributes,

- coupling two "logical" signaling connections (for example at the transition from the national network to the international network).

5 The ISDN user part directly uses the Message Transfer Part - MTP - and the Signaling Connection and Control Part - SCCP, layer 4; the ISUP itself is consequently to be classified as belonging to layers 4 to 7 in the OSI reference model. The ISDN user part controls both
10 the link-by-link signaling to reach the destination and the end-to-end signaling relationship between the originating exchange and the destination exchange. With the aid of the link-by-link signaling, the path for the user information connection and the signaling connection is sought and, after corresponding commands,
15 is set up. The MTP is used for this purpose. For the user information connection, all the involved exchanges must be informed, for example by switching through the user information channel, while only the originating and destination exchanges exchange signaling
20 information for the control of the service attributes. For the end-to-end signaling, the ISUP uses the services of the SCCP. In the ISDN user part, the actual signaling information is exchanged. All the lower-level layers ensure that this information is
25 transmitted in an acknowledged form and reaches the addressed user part. For the exchange of the end-to-end signaling messages for handling ISDN service attributes, the end-to-end signaling of the SCCP is
30 used, based on a TCAP dialog.

For more complex applications within communication networks, such as for example for supporting database inquiries pertaining to services of the Intelligent
35 Network - also referred to as IN - or in the case of mobile radio applications, the Transaction Capabilities Application Part - TCAP - was introduced into the Signaling System No. 7. For example, with the

freephone service of the Intelligent Network, the initiator of the connection dials an IN call number (0130 or 0800), which, by calling up the Intelligent Network, determines a destination call number on the basis of the customer parameters. For determining the valid destination call number, only signaling messages have to be exchanged; the user information channel is not connected to the IN. This service call is an example of a typical TCAP application. In the communication of TCAP entities, a distinction is made between structured dialog and unstructured dialog. In the case of structured transport, before messages are exchanged, a transaction relationship is initiated and the transaction code - also referred to as the transaction ID - is allocated in both communication devices of the two signaling nodes involved for the identification of this relationship. After a BEGIN message, in the structured dialog the individual information is transferred with CONTINUE messages. The BEGIN message contains the transaction code of the initiator, the CONTINUE messages contain, depending on the direction of transmission, the code of the initiator or the code of the communication partner as the originating code and the code of the communication partner as the destination code. Once the information has been transmitted, the dialog is ended in the normal way by the END message. Structured dialog is used for example for database inquiries, such as for example in the mobile radio networks or in the IN; all exchanged messages can be identified as belonging to this activity by the transaction code.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The ~~The object of the invention is~~ discloses a waiting procedure in which, with reasonable expenditure and also with a predetermined number of operators, the waiting time of calling subscribers is passed in a more acceptable way than in the case of the known methods.

The ~~object~~ invention is achieved in one embodiment by a method of ~~the type stated at the beginning~~ in which the waiting procedure to which a request is subjected is

5 carried out according to the invention as follows:

an entry is generated as a call-back entry with information which contains a call address concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a

10 waiting field, the request or a connection arising from it being terminated, and when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the at

15 least one entry, a call-back connection is established between the subscriber specified by the call address and the free operator or the free connection line.

~~This solution achieves the stated object in a simple way.~~ The calling subscriber can leave his request to use the service without having to "hang on" during the entire waiting time. In addition, the call charges which would arise during this waiting time do not

20 apply.

25 According to an ~~alternative implementational variant~~ another embodiment of the method according to the invention, the waiting procedure is carried out as follows:

30 An entry is generated as a call-back entry with information which contains a call address concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the request or a connection arising from

35 it being terminated.

At least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of

the information of the entry, a call-back connection directed at the subscriber specified by the call address is initiated and is possibly maintained. Subsequently, the call-back connection is established
5 between the specified subscriber and a free subscriber or a free connection line. In this implementational variant, possibly occurring waiting times for the operators are avoided, since the waiting subscriber is called back already before an operator actually becomes
10 free and, if need be, is connected to an announcement. When a suitable operator becomes free, the already called-back subscriber is immediately put through. In an ~~advantageous~~ still another embodiment of the invention, at the beginning of the waiting procedure
15 for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, provided that it lies above a predeterminable lower threshold value, a call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is arranged in sequence in the waiting field. This avoids the
20 generation of a call-back in the case of short waiting times, when the subscriber is quite willing to wait.

In addition, ~~it may be expedient~~ if, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an
25 anticipated waiting time is determined and, provided that it lies below a predeterminable upper threshold value, a call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is denied. This procedure is useful wherever the waiting time would become so great, for example
30 several hours, that waiting for the call-back would presumably be onerous or pointless for the subscriber.

It is ~~favorable~~ preferable if, before terminating the request or the connection arising from it, service-
35 specific instructions are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.

Service-specific instructions may in this case be, for example, the selection of an operator group, such as for example for a subservice (for example division of the foreign information service into subservices corresponding to geographical areas); they may concern special service features, such as for example a language desired by the subscriber for the services provided or a customer number of the calling subscriber, which could be used for example in the selection of an operator. The instructions may have been provided by the subscriber in a connection arising from the request, for example in an automated inquiry or as a suffix of the service call number dialed by the subscriber.

Furthermore, it is ~~favorable~~ preferable if, at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions concerning the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and a call-back entry is only generated if these instructions include consent of the subscriber to a call-back connection.

At the same time, to increase operating convenience, it is ~~beneficial~~ preferable if the instructions of the calling subscriber are taken in a voice-controlled dialog.

In an ~~expedient~~ yet another embodiment of the invention, more flexible handling of the call-back can be achieved if, when an operator becomes free, the first entry in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it. ~~It is immaterial in particular here whether the operator initiates~~ The operator may initiate the call-back by pressing a button for example, whereupon the call-back connection

is established, or the call-back connection is produced automatically by the console, without confirmation by the operator.

5 ~~In a favorable way, The~~ instructions originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are additionally used when generating the call-back entry, and, when taking an entry, ~~only~~ those entries which include the free operator in their
10 operator selection are considered. The instructions may be taken from the subscriber, for example as mentioned further above, or have been provided as a suffix of the call number dialed by the subscriber.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention together with further benefits is explained in more detail below on the basis of a non-restrictive exemplary embodiment, which concerns an operator service of a fixed telephone network. Used as
20 a basis for this explanation are the attached figures, which show schematic representations and in which:

figure Figure 1 shows the switching system for carrying out
25 the operator service with the assigned operators.

figure Figure 2 shows the waiting field of the operator service; ~~and.~~

30 figure Figure 3 shows a flow diagram of the generation of an entry of the waiting field.

35 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

An exemplary ~~In the case of the~~ switching system OPS is shown in figure 1, on which the operator service is operated, ~~only the components most important for this~~

are shown, insofar as they are significant for the invention. The consoles of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 assigned to the operator service OPS and the network subscribers TN1, TN2, ..., TNx are connected into the fixed telephone network via subscriber lines and line trunk groups (not represented in the drawing), for example connected as shown to the switching unit KPN of the exchange. In the example, three operators are assigned to the operator service; ~~it goes without saying that.~~ Of course, there may be any desired number of operators. Provided for controlling the switching system OPS is a coordination processor COP, which also undertakes the assignment to the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 of the subscribers TNx calling with a service request.

A subscriber TNx wishing to use the operator service OPS requests this service by dialing a service call number which is assigned in the telephone network to the operator service. The request for connection received by the operator service consequently represents a service request. If one of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 is free, the request is answered by the request for connection being put through by the coordination processor COP to the free operator.

However, for purposes of this example, it will be assumed hereafter that all the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 are busy attending to service requests from subscribers - not shown in figure 1. Further service requests therefore cannot be handled immediately; ~~instead.~~ Instead, they are subjected to a waiting procedure by the coordination processor COP. In known systems, for example, a recording, for example with the announcement "please wait", is played to the subscriber, and the request concerned is arranged in sequence in a waiting field WFD, usually at the end of the line created by the waiting field WFD. When an operator becomes free,

the first request is taken from the waiting field and the subscriber is connected to the free operator.

According to the invention, it is provided that the
5 waiting procedure is carried out on the basis of a request from a subscriber TNx for a (currently) busy operator service OPS as follows: an entry which is generated from call-relevant data of the subscriber TNx is arranged in sequence in the waiting field and the
10 request for connection of the subscriber is terminated. The service request is answered by a separate call-back, which is initiated from the operator system when an operator becomes free on the basis of the call-relevant data in the first entry.

15 Figure 2 shows by way of example a waiting field WFD according to the invention with several entries, which are also referred to hereafter as call-back entries RRE. In the example shown, a call-back entry in each
20 case ~~contains~~ includes a call number trn of the subscriber, from the service request of which the call-back entry originates. The call number trn serves as a call address when the subscriber is called back. A second field opw of the entry designates a selection of
25 the desired operators, for example for a desired language, for special subservices or the like. For the sake of simplicity, in figure 2 the operator selections opw in the entries are symbolized by figures, which relate to the number of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3.
30 ~~Further~~ Additional information ~~dat—contained~~ data included in an entry concerns additional data which have been provided by the subscriber on the basis of the operator service used.

35 Referring to the flow diagram of figure 3, if a request received by the operator service OPS as a result of a call of a subscriber TNx cannot be answered because the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 are busy, an automated dialog

is first conducted with the subscriber, asking the calling subscriber to give service-specific instructions, for example for a subservice desired by the subscriber or desired service features, such as for instance a preferred language. The instructions are stored in a data field dat when an entry is generated and/or used for determining an operator selection opw, which indicates which of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 is to answer the entry.

10

The anticipated waiting time before an answer can be given is then determined. This waiting time is determined by a predetermined method of a known type, for example on the basis of how busy the operator service is, in particular the number of requests waiting, and the processing time of previous service requests. If the anticipated waiting time lies below a predeterminable lower threshold value, for example below 2 minutes, the request is held in the known way as a waiting entry WTE in the waiting line, the calling subscriber TNx being informed by means of an automated announcement that his call will be dealt with shortly.

20

If, however, the anticipated waiting time exceeds the threshold value, a waiting procedure by means of a call-back takes place. A call-back entry RRE is generated using the call number tn timer of the subscriber TNx and arranged in sequence in the waiting field WFD. The subscriber then receives an automated announcement that his request has been registered and he will be called back, ~~in a favorable way.~~ Preferably, he may be additionally informed of the anticipated waiting time. The connection is subsequently terminated.

30

The arrangement in sequence rrr of the call-back entry generally takes place at the end of the waiting field. In special cases, an entry may also be arranged at some other position in the sequence, the position being

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determined for example on the basis of the subscriber data and the existing entries of the waiting list. For example, it could be provided that a specific group of callers is given preferential treatment and their requests or call-back entries are therefore arranged in sequence ahead of entries of other callers.

In addition to or instead of the already mentioned lower threshold value t_1 , a second, upper threshold value t_2 may be provided. If the anticipated waiting time lies above the upper threshold value t_2 , for example over 3 hours, incoming service requests are denied, for example with an announcement which informs the subscriber that the service is busy and asks him to call back at a later time, and the creation of an entry for the waiting field does not occur.

In a variant (not represented in figure 3) of the invention, the decision with respect to the type of waiting procedure can be left to the calling subscriber. For example, the subscriber is informed in a voice-controlled dialog of the position in which he would be waiting in line and/or the probable waiting time and is given the option of waiting in line, being called back or ending the call without any further action.

If one of the operators of the service OPS becomes free, for example the operator OP3, a suitable entry is taken from the waiting field WFD and answered. It may, for example, always be the first entry in the waiting field that is taken out (figure 2). The waiting field WFD is advantageously searched through, beginning from the first position, for an entry which includes the free operator in its operator selection opw, and this entry is taken and used as a basis for the answer ent'.

In this example, the first entry with an operator selection which includes the operator OP3 (represented in figure 2 by the figure assigned to this operator, that is 3) is that entry with the call number tn3 of the subscriber TN3. (It is coincidental that the number of the operator is the same as that of the subscriber.) This entry is then taken from the waiting field and the information of the entry is supplied to the free operator OP3. On the basis of this information, the operator calls the subscriber TN3 back, for example by pressing a button on the console, whereby the establishment of a connection is initiated in a known way, and in this way offers the subscriber the desired service. In a variant, the call-back connection may be established automatically by the operator console and provided to the operator together with the information of the call-back entry.

To avoid waiting times for the operators, not only the entry position which is first in the waiting field but also the penultimate entry or a number of entries positioned first in the waiting field are advantageously taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection set up for each of them. Those entries for which the still remaining waiting time within the waiting procedure is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value, or a predetermined waiting time, are advantageously taken from the waiting field. The called-back subscribers are, for example, played an appropriate announcement, by which the end of the waiting procedure is indicated and the subscriber is switched through as soon as possible to the desired operator or subscriber.

The initiation according to the invention of a call-back connection to a specified subscriber as part of a waiting procedure provided in relation to an operator service represents in principle an advantageous

development of the ISDN-specific "Call Completion on Busy Subscriber" service feature - also referred to as "CCBS" - specified according to the ETSI standard - cf. ETS 300 357 -, which however can be used ~~only~~ for one
5 subscriber line in each case.

The "Call Completion on Busy Subscriber" service feature is one of the most complex service features within ISDN-specific telephone networks. In the case
10 of this service feature, a calling subscriber encountering a busy B subscriber line can have an automatic call-back initiated by the network when this subscriber is free again. In signaling terms, the unsuccessful connection to the B subscriber is
15 initially terminated. In the destination exchange, the call-back request is then entered, it being determined by the destination exchange when the B subscriber is free again or has the free status. The determination
20 of the free status can be achieved for example by regularly checking the switching status of the B subscriber. Alternatively, the transition of the subscriber status from "busy" to "free" may be selected or set as the triggering criterion for the initiation
25 of the call-back. When the free status of the B subscriber is established, it is firstly checked whether the A subscriber is likewise free, then the latter is called and after that a connection to the B subscriber is set up. The handling of the service
30 feature - i.e. the checking of the B subscriber and the notification of the A subscriber - takes place as an end-to-end signaling between the two subscriber exchanges. The control of the service feature is supported for this on the SCCP end-to-end signaling
35 connections and uses a TCAP-based dialog for the exchange of the end-to-end signaling data.

The method according to the invention represents a further development of the CCBS standard, the same

procedures as CCBS being used for the signaling of the call-back information from the B subscriber to the A subscriber - i.e. the setting up of SCCP end-to-end signaling connections and exchange of end-to-end signaling data by means of TCAP dialog. By contrast with CCBS, other triggering criteria can be used in the case of the method according to the invention. With the aid of the method according to the invention, call-back connections can be created as part of a waiting procedure, it being possible to use for example the finding that the waiting time within a waiting line is less than expected as a triggering criterion for the initiation of a call-back connection. A service feature created in this way, i.e. initiation of a call-back to a specified subscriber if a waiting time is less than that predetermined, can also be referred to as "Call Completion on Dequeueing" or "CCDQ".

The method according to the invention may be used advantageously in the case of subscriber lines or connection lines arranged network-wide within a telephone network and combined to form a subscriber group. The subscriber group may be connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or transmission channels - for example via a private branch exchange - to the public telecommunication network.

Processing a request to an operator service

In telecommunication networks, in particular in telephone networks, what are known as operator services are provided, often representing an important link between the customers of the network and the network operators. The tasks of such an operator service are many and varied; a main task, for example, is to provide the subscribers with information on request. A subscriber wishing to use an operator service requests in the telecommunication network concerned the setting up of a connection to the operator service, for example in a telephone network in the form of a call by means of a service number assigned to the operator service; on the part of the operator service, the request for connection is accepted and the desired service is provided for the calling subscriber.

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operator service - also known as a "hunting group". A hunting group is assigned a group call number or pilot call number, which is shared by all the interconnected subscriber lines, and, after it has been dialed - for example for the setting up of a communication link to one of the communication devices assigned to the group - a free subscriber line within the group is determined with the aid of a defined search method - also referred to as a "hunting algorithm" - for setting up the connection.

For example, a subscriber may call an operator service in an ISDN network in order to request information and a connection concerning another subscriber. The subscriber is assigned to a free operator and obtains from the latter the requested service, for example the desired information. The responsible operator can then, if necessary, access a database for example, the operator then being provided on the screen of his PC with information concerning the other subscriber. If also desired, the operator can set up a connection with the desired subscriber and put the latter through to the calling subscriber. The example just described is intended to represent only one of the possibilities or tasks of an operator service.

A system for carrying out an operator service comprises not only a central control system but also the assigned operators. The control system and the operators are usually stationed at 'call centers', as they are known, and their respective equipment, comprising a terminal, PC, screen etc. and referred to usually and hereafter as a "console", is directly connected to the system, or can be connected to it. For example, a call center may be established as part of one of the applicant's EWSD switching systems, the operators being connected as network subscribers. Another known embodiment of a call center is set up for example in the central

station of a branch exchange, the operators or the subscribers assigned to the operator service being reachable via extensions. The branch exchanges are connected via a predetermined number of connection
5 lines or transmission channels to the higher-level or public communication network.

Since the number of operators of a given operator service is limited, in particular for reasons of
10 economy, there is often the situation - in particular at peak times - that all the available operators are already busy attending to calling subscribers and consequently, when a further subscriber calls for the operator service, no operator is free to take the call.
15 Since in such a case the request is usually not to be handled like a request for connection to a busy line - that is rejection with a busy signal of the telecommunication network -, a waiting procedure is provided for the request received.

20 A known and widely customary method for a waiting procedure, in particular in the case of telephone services, consists in that the request or the call is made to wait in line; the calls waiting in line are
25 taken by operators one after the other. The calling subscriber must remain on the phone for the entire time until his call is taken. Owing to long waiting times, the call is often terminated prematurely by the - irritated - subscriber; this may lead to a lack of
30 acceptance of the service and, as a consequence, to actual dissatisfaction on the part of the customers with the operator of the service.

Another attempted solution is to reduce the waiting
35 time at especially busy times by assigning further operators to the service concerned for a short time. However, apart from the associated administrative effort, this solution requires in principle that an

adequately large number of operator personnel are available.

Within current telephone networks, the signaling for
5 setting up and clearing down 64 kbit user information connections for controlling ISDN services takes place on the basis of the ITU-T Signaling System No. 7 - also referred to as SS No. 7.

10 The actual task of the Signaling System No. 7 is to exchange signaling messages within the communication networks. The signaling messages are exchanged by the user parts within the reference model. According to
15 for example, between the Telephone User Part - TUP -, the Data User Part - DUP -, the ISDN User Part - ISUP - and the Broadband ISDN User Part - B-ISUP. The TUP was implemented as the first application in the Signaling System No. 7. Building on the TUP, the ISUP was
20 defined for generally establishing the ISDN and for establishing the signaling within the ISDN. The ISUP gave rise to the latest application of the B-ISUP for applications within ATM-based networks. The main tasks of the ISUP are:

- 25
- setting up and clearing down user information connections,
 - performing the signaling for service attributes,
 - coupling two "logical" signaling connections (for
30 example at the transition from the national network to the international network).

The ISDN user part directly uses the Message Transfer Part - MTP - and the Signaling Connection and Control
35 Part - SCCP, layer 4; the ISUP itself is consequently to be classified as belonging to layers 4 to 7 in the OSI reference model. The ISDN user part controls both the link-by-link signaling to reach the destination and

the end-to-end signaling relationship between the originating exchange and the destination exchange. With the aid of the link-by-link signaling, the path for the user information connection and the signaling connection is sought and, after corresponding commands, is set up. The MTP is used for this purpose. For the user information connection, all the involved exchanges must be informed, for example by switching through the user information channel, while only the originating and destination exchanges exchange signaling information for the control of the service attributes. For the end-to-end signaling, the ISUP uses the services of the SCCP. In the ISDN user part, the actual signaling information is exchanged. All the lower-level layers ensure that this information is transmitted in an acknowledged form and reaches the addressed user part. For the exchange of the end-to-end signaling messages for handling ISDN service attributes, the end-to-end signaling of the SCCP is used, based on a TCAP dialog.

For more complex applications within communication networks, such as for example for supporting database inquiries pertaining to services of the Intelligent Network - also referred to as IN - or in the case of mobile radio applications, the Transaction Capabilities Application Part - TCAP - was introduced into the Signaling System No. 7. For example, with the freephone service of the Intelligent Network, the initiator of the connection dials an IN call number (0130 or 0800), which, by calling up the Intelligent Network, determines a destination call number on the basis of the customer parameters. For determining the valid destination call number, only signaling messages have to be exchanged; the user information channel is not connected to the IN. This service call is an example of a typical TCAP application. In the communication of TCAP entities, a distinction is made

between structured dialog and unstructured dialog. In the case of structured transport, before messages are exchanged, a transaction relationship is initiated and the transaction code - also referred to as the transaction ID - is allocated in both communication devices of the two signaling nodes involved for the identification of this relationship. After a BEGIN message, in the structured dialog the individual information is transferred with CONTINUE messages. The BEGIN message contains the transaction code of the initiator, the CONTINUE messages contain, depending on the direction of transmission, the code of the initiator or the code of the communication partner as the originating code and the code of the communication partner as the destination code. Once the information has been transmitted, the dialog is ended in the normal way by the END message. Structured dialog is used for example for database inquiries, such as for example in the mobile radio networks or in the IN; all exchanged messages can be identified as belonging to this activity by the transaction code.

The object of the invention is a waiting procedure in which, with reasonable expenditure and also with a predetermined number of operators, the waiting time of calling subscribers is passed in a more acceptable way than in the case of the known methods.

The object is achieved by a method of the type stated at the beginning in which the waiting procedure to which a request is subjected is carried out according to the invention as follows:

an entry is generated as a call-back entry with information which contains a call address concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the request or a connection arising from it being terminated, and when an operator or a

connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the at least one entry, a call-back connection is established
5 between the subscriber specified by the call address and the free operator or the free connection line.

This solution achieves the stated object in a simple way. The calling subscriber can leave his request to
10 use the service without having to "hang on" during the entire waiting time. In addition, the call charges which would arise during this waiting time do not apply.

15 According to an alternative implementational variant of the method according to the invention, the waiting procedure is carried out as follows:

An entry is generated as a call-back entry with information which contains a call address concerning
20 the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field, the request or a connection arising from it being terminated.

25 At least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection directed at the subscriber specified by the call address is initiated and is possibly maintained.
30 Subsequently, the call-back connection is established between the specified subscriber and a free subscriber or a free connection line. In this implementational variant, possibly occurring waiting times for the operators are avoided, since the waiting subscriber is
35 called back already before an operator actually becomes free and, if need be, is connected to an announcement. When a suitable operator becomes free, the already called-back subscriber is immediately put through.

In an advantageous embodiment of the invention, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, provided that it lies above a predeterminable lower threshold value, a call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is arranged in sequence in the waiting field. This avoids the generation of a call-back in the case of short waiting times, when the subscriber is quite willing to wait.

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In addition, it may be expedient if, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, provided that it lies below a predeterminable upper threshold value, a call-back entry is generated, otherwise the request is denied. This procedure is useful wherever the waiting time would become so great, for example several hours, that waiting for the call-back would presumably be onerous or pointless for the subscriber.

20

It is favorable if, before terminating the request or the connection arising from it, service-specific instructions are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.

25

Service-specific instructions may in this case be, for example, the selection of an operator group, such as for example for a subservice (for example division of the foreign information service into subservices corresponding to geographical areas); they may concern special service features, such as for example a language desired by the subscriber for the services provided or a customer number of the calling subscriber, which could be used for example in the selection of an operator. The instructions may have been provided by the subscriber in a connection arising from the request, for example in an automated inquiry

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or as a suffix of the service call number dialed by the subscriber.

Furthermore, it is favorable if, at the beginning of
5 the waiting procedure, instructions concerning the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and a call-back entry is only generated if these instructions include consent of the subscriber to a call-back connection.

10

At the same time, to increase operating convenience, it is beneficial if the instructions of the calling subscriber are taken in a voice-controlled dialog.

15 In an expedient embodiment of the invention, more flexible handling of the call-back can be achieved if, when an operator becomes free, the first entry in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the entry is supplied to the free
20 operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it. It is immaterial in particular here whether the operator initiates the call-back by pressing a button for example, whereupon the call-back connection is
25 established, or the call-back connection is produced automatically by the console, without confirmation by the operator.

In a favorable way, instructions originating from the
30 calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are additionally used when generating the call-back entry, and, when taking an entry, only those entries which include the free operator in their operator selection are considered. The instructions may be
35 taken from the subscriber, for example as mentioned further above, or have been provided as a suffix of the call number dialed by the subscriber.

The invention together with further benefits is explained in more detail below on the basis of a non-restrictive exemplary embodiment, which concerns an operator service of a fixed telephone network. Used as
 5 a basis for this explanation are the attached figures, which show schematic representations and in which:

figure 1 shows the switching system for carrying out the operator service with the assigned
 10 operators;

figure 2 shows the waiting field of the operator service; and

15 figure 3 shows a flow diagram of the generation of an entry of the waiting field.

In the case of the switching system OPS shown in figure 1, on which the operator service is operated, only the components most important for this are shown, insofar
 20 as they are significant for the invention. The consoles of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 assigned to the operator service OPS and the network subscribers TN1, TN2,...,TNx are connected into the fixed telephone
 25 network via subscriber lines and line trunk groups (not represented in the drawing), for example connected as shown to the switching unit KPN of the exchange. In the example, three operators are assigned to the operator service; it goes without saying that there may
 30 be any desired number of operators. Provided for controlling the switching system OPS is a coordination processor COP, which also undertakes the assignment to the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 of the subscribers TNx calling with a service request.

35

A subscriber TNx wishing to use the operator service OPS requests this service by dialing a service call number which is assigned in the telephone network to

the operator service. The request for connection received by the operator service consequently represents a service request. If one of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 is free, the request is answered by the request for connection being put through by the coordination processor COP to the free operator.

However, it will be assumed hereafter that all the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 are busy attending to service requests from subscribers - not shown in figure 1. Further service requests therefore cannot be handled immediately; instead, they are subjected to a waiting procedure by the coordination processor COP. In known systems, for example, a recording, for example with the announcement "please wait", is played to the subscriber, and the request concerned is arranged in sequence in a waiting field WFD, usually at the end of the line created by the waiting field WFD. When an operator becomes free, the first request is taken from the waiting field and the subscriber is connected to the free operator.

According to the invention, it is provided that the waiting procedure is carried out on the basis of a request from a subscriber TNx for a (currently) busy operator service OPS as follows: an entry which is generated from call-relevant data of the subscriber TNx is arranged in sequence in the waiting field and the request for connection of the subscriber is terminated. The service request is answered by a separate call-back, which is initiated from the operator system when an operator becomes free on the basis of the call-relevant data in the first entry.

Figure 2 shows by way of example a waiting field WFD according to the invention with several entries, which are also referred to hereafter as call-back entries RRE. In the example shown, a call-back entry in each

case contains a call number trn of the subscriber, from the service request of which the call-back entry originates. The call number trn serves as a call address when the subscriber is called back. A second
5 field opw of the entry designates a selection of the desired operators, for example for a desired language, for special subservices or the like. For the sake of simplicity, in figure 2 the operator selections opw in the entries are symbolized by figures, which relate to
10 the number of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3. Further information dat contained in an entry concerns additional data which have been provided by the subscriber on the basis of the operator service used.

15 Referring to the flow diagram of figure 3, if a request received by the operator service OPS as a result of a call of a subscriber TNx cannot be answered because the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 are busy, an automated dialog is first conducted with the subscriber, asking the
20 calling subscriber to give service-specific instructions, for example for a subservice desired by the subscriber or desired service features, such as for instance a preferred language. The instructions are stored in a data field dat when an entry is generated
25 and/or used for determining an operator selection opw, which indicates which of the operators OP1, OP2, OP3 is to answer the entry.

The anticipated waiting time before an answer can be
30 given is then determined. This waiting time is determined by a predetermined method of a known type, for example on the basis of how busy the operator service is, in particular the number of requests waiting, and the processing time of previous service
35 requests. If the anticipated waiting time lies below a predeterminable lower threshold value, for example below 2 minutes, the request is held in the known way as a waiting entry WTE in the waiting line, the calling

subscriber TNx being informed by means of an automated announcement that his call will be dealt with shortly.

If, however, the anticipated waiting time exceeds the
5 threshold value, a waiting procedure by means of a
call-back takes place. A call-back entry RRE is
generated using the call number tn timer of the subscriber
TNx and arranged in sequence in the waiting field WFD.
The subscriber then receives an automated announcement
10 that his request has been registered and he will be
called back; in a favorable way, he may be additionally
informed of the anticipated waiting time. The
connection is subsequently terminated.

15 The arrangement in sequence rrr of the call-back entry
generally takes place at the end of the waiting field.
In special cases, an entry may also be arranged at some
other position in the sequence, the position being
determined for example on the basis of the subscriber
20 data and the existing entries of the waiting list. For
example, it could be provided that a specific group of
callers is given preferential treatment and their
requests or call-back entries are therefore arranged in
sequence ahead of entries of other callers.

25 In addition to or instead of the already mentioned
lower threshold value t1, a second, upper threshold
value t2 may be provided. If the anticipated waiting
time lies above the upper threshold value t2, for
30 example over 3 hours, incoming service requests are
denied, for example with an announcement which informs
the subscriber that the service is busy and asks him to
call back at a later time, and the creation of an entry
for the waiting field does not occur.

35 In a variant (not represented in figure 3) of the
invention, the decision with respect to the type of
waiting procedure can be left to the calling

subscriber. For example, the subscriber is informed in a voice-controlled dialog of the position in which he would be waiting in line and/or the probable waiting time and is given the option of waiting in line, being
5 called back or ending the call without any further action.

If one of the operators of the service OPS becomes free, for example the operator OP3, a suitable entry is
10 taken from the waiting field WFD and answered. It may, for example, always be the first entry in the waiting field that is taken out (figure 2). The waiting field WFD is advantageously searched through, beginning from
15 the first position, for an entry which includes the free operator in its operator selection opw, and this entry is taken and used as a basis for the answer out'.

In this example, the first entry with an operator selection which includes the operator OP3 (represented
20 in figure 2 by the figure assigned to this operator, that is 3) is that entry with the call number tn3 of the subscriber TN3. (It is coincidental that the number of the operator is the same as that of the subscriber.) This entry is then taken from the waiting
25 field and the information of the entry is supplied to the free operator OP3. On the basis of this information, the operator calls the subscriber TN3 back, for example by pressing a button on the console, whereby the establishment of a connection is initiated
30 in a known way, and in this way offers the subscriber the desired service. In a variant, the call-back connection may be established automatically by the operator console and provided to the operator together with the information of the call-back entry.

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To avoid waiting times for the operators, not only the entry position which is first in the waiting field but also the penultimate entry or a number of entries

positioned first in the waiting field are advantageously taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection set up for each of them. Those entries for which the still remaining waiting time within the
5 waiting procedure is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value, or a predetermined waiting time, are advantageously taken from the waiting field. The called-back subscribers are, for example, played an appropriate announcement, by which the end of
10 the waiting procedure is indicated and the subscriber is switched through as soon as possible to the desired operator or subscriber.

The initiation according to the invention of a call-back connection to a specified subscriber as part of a
15 waiting procedure provided in relation to an operator service represents in principle an advantageous development of the ISDN-specific "Call Completion on Busy Subscriber" service feature - also referred to as
20 "CCBS" - specified according to the ETSI standard - cf. ETS 300 357 -, which however can be used only for one subscriber line in each case.

The "Call Completion on Busy Subscriber" service
25 feature is one of the most complex service features within ISDN-specific telephone networks. In the case of this service feature, a calling subscriber encountering a busy B subscriber line can have an automatic call-back initiated by the network when this
30 subscriber is free again. In signaling terms, the unsuccessful connection to the B subscriber is initially terminated. In the destination exchange, the call-back request is then entered, it being determined by the destination exchange when the B subscriber is
35 free again or has the free status. The determination of the free status can be achieved for example by regularly checking the switching status of the B subscriber. Alternatively, the transition of the

subscriber status from "busy" to "free" may be selected or set as the triggering criterion for the initiation of the call-back. When the free status of the B subscriber is established, it is firstly checked
5 whether the A subscriber is likewise free, then the latter is called and after that a connection to the B subscriber is set up. The handling of the service feature - i.e. the checking of the B subscriber and the notification of the A subscriber - takes place as an
10 end-to-end signaling between the two subscriber exchanges. The control of the service feature is supported for this on the SCCP end-to-end signaling connections and uses a TCAP-based dialog for the exchange of the end-to-end signaling data.

15 The method according to the invention represents a further development of the CCBS standard, the same procedures as CCBS being used for the signaling of the call-back information from the B subscriber to the A
20 subscriber - i.e. the setting up of SCCP end-to-end signaling connections and exchange of end-to-end signaling data by means of TCAP dialog. By contrast with CCBS, other triggering criteria can be used in the case of the method according to the invention. With
25 the aid of the method according to the invention, call-back connections can be created as part of a waiting procedure, it being possible to use for example the finding that the waiting time within a waiting line is less than expected as a triggering criterion for the
30 initiation of a call-back connection. A service feature created in this way, i.e. initiation of a call-back to a specified subscriber if a waiting time is less than that predetermined, can also be referred to as "Call Completion on Dequeueing" or "CCDQ".

35 The method according to the invention may be used advantageously in the case of subscriber lines or connection lines arranged network-wide within a

telephone network and combined to form a subscriber group. The subscriber group may be connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or transmission channels - for example via a private
5 branch exchange - to the public telecommunication network.

Patent claims

1. A method of processing requests directed to an operator service (OPS) of a telecommunication network which are respectively received in the form of a request for connection from a calling subscriber (TN1-TNx) of the network for the operator service, the operator service (OPS) being assigned a predetermined number of operators (OP1, OP2, OP3) and/or connection lines, in which method a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if all the suitable operators or connection lines for this request are busy, characterized in that the waiting procedure to which a request is subjected is carried out as follows:
an entry is generated as a call-back entry (RRE) with information which contains a call address (trn) concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field (WFD), the request or a connection arising from it being terminated, and
when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries (ent) in the waiting field (WFD) is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the at least one entry, a call-back connection is established between the subscriber specified by the call address (trn) and the free operator or the free connection line.
2. A method of processing requests directed to an operator service (OPS) of a telecommunication network which are respectively received in the form of a request for connection from a calling subscriber (TN1-TNx) of the network for the operator service, the operator service (OPS) being

assigned a predetermined number of operators (OP1, OP2, OP3) and/or connection lines, in which method a received request is subjected to a waiting procedure on the part of the operator service if all the suitable operators or connection lines for this request are busy, characterized in that the waiting procedure to which a request is subjected is carried out as follows:

an entry is generated as a call-back entry (RRE) with information which contains a call address (trn) concerning the calling subscriber and/or information representing the calling subscriber and is arranged in sequence in a waiting field (WFD), the request or a connection arising from it being terminated, and

in that at least one of the first entries (ent) in the waiting field (WFD) is taken from the waiting field and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection directed at the subscriber specified by the call address (trn) is initiated and is possibly maintained, and

in that the call-back connection is established between the specified subscriber and a free operator or a free connection line.

3. The method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, characterized in that, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and, provided that it lies above a predeterminable lower threshold value (t1), a call-back entry (RRE) is generated, otherwise the request (WTE) is arranged in sequence in the waiting field.
4. The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that, at the beginning of the waiting procedure for the request concerned, an anticipated waiting time is determined and,

provided that it lies below a predeterminable upper threshold value (t_2), a call-back entry (RRE) is generated, otherwise the request is denied.

5. The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that, before terminating the request or the connection arising from it, service-specific instructions (opw, dat) are taken from the calling subscriber and used when generating the call-back entry and/or arranging it in sequence.
6. The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that, at the beginning of the waiting procedure, instructions concerning the desired type of waiting procedure are taken from the calling subscriber, and a call-back entry (RRE) is only generated if these instructions include consent of the subscriber to a call-back connection.
7. The method as claimed in claim 5 or 6, characterized in that the instructions of the calling subscriber are taken in a voice-controlled dialog.
8. The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that, when an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries in the waiting field is taken from the waiting field, the information of the at least one entry is supplied to the free operator and, on the basis of the information of the entry, the operator calls back the subscriber specified in it.
9. The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 8, characterized in that instructions (opw) originating from the calling subscriber and concerning an operator selection are used when generating the call-back entry (RRE); and in that, when taking an entry, only those entries (ent') which include the free operator in their operator selection are considered.

10. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that at least one of those entries for which the still remaining waiting time in the waiting field is expected to be below a predeterminable threshold value, or a predeterminable waiting time, is taken from the waiting field and a call-back connection is initiated.
11. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the information representing that an operator or a connection line has become free is transmitted in the direction of the specified subscriber with the aid of the Transaction Capabilities Part Protocol (TCAP), on the basis of the Signaling System No. 7, the initiation of the call-back connection taking place on the side of the specified subscriber.
12. The method as claimed in one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the operator service is formed by a number of subscriber lines arranged in the telecommunication network and combined to form a subscriber group.
13. The method as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that the subscriber group is connected via a predetermined number of connection lines or connection channels to the telecommunication network.

Abstract

Processing a request to an operator service

In the event that all suitable operators or connection lines of an operator service of a telecommunication network are busy when a subscriber request (call) is made to said service, a call-back entry (RRE) with information containing a call address (trn) of the subscriber is generated and arranged in sequence in a waiting field (WFD); the request or the associated connection is terminated. When an operator or a connection line becomes free, at least one of the first entries (ent, ent') in the waiting field is taken and, on the basis of the information of the entry, a call-back connection is established between the subscriber and the free operator.

Figure 2

1/2

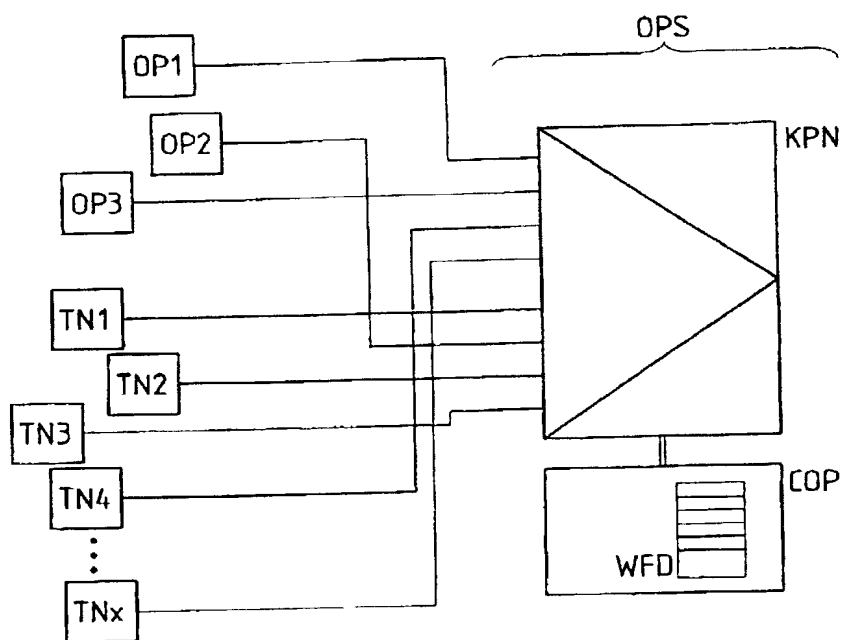


Fig. 1

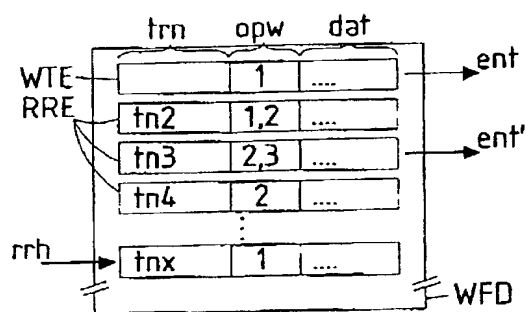


Fig. 2

2/2

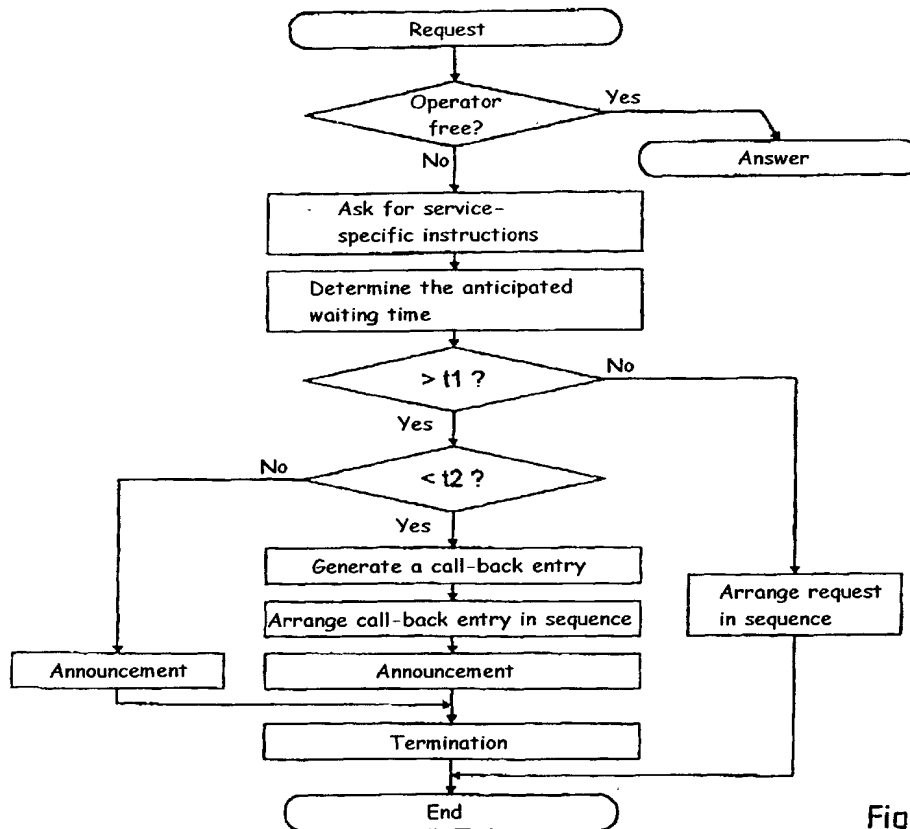


Fig. 3

Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

Erklärung Für Patentanmeldungen Mit Vollmacht

German Language Declaration

Als nachstehend benannter Erfinder erkläre ich hiermit an Eides Statt:

dass mein Wohnsitz, meine Postanschrift, und meine Staatsangehörigkeit den im Nachstehenden nach meinem Namen aufgeführten Angaben entsprechen,

dass ich, nach bestem Wissen der ursprüngliche, erste und alleinige Erfinder (falls nachstehend nur ein Name angegeben ist) oder ein ursprünglicher, erster und Miterfinder (falls nachstehend mehrere Namen aufgeführt sind) des Gegenstandes bin, für den dieser Antrag gestellt wird und für den ein Patent beantragt wird für die Erfindung mit dem Titel:

Bearbeitung einer Anforderung an ein Operatorservice

deren Beschreibung

(zutreffendes ankreuzen)

☐ hier beigefügt ist.

☒ am 28.06.2000 als

PCT internationale Anmeldung

PCT Anmeldungsnummer PCT/DE00/02102

eingereicht wurde und am

abgeändert wurde (falls tatsächlich abgeändert).

Ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich den Inhalt der obigen Patentanmeldung einschliesslich der Ansprüche durchgesehen und verstanden habe, die eventuell durch einen Zusatzantrag wie oben erwähnt abgeändert wurde.

Ich erkenne meine Pflicht zur Offenbarung irgendwelcher Informationen, die für die Prüfung der vorliegenden Anmeldung in Einklang mit Absatz 37, Bundesgesetzbuch, Paragraph 1.56(a) von Wichtigkeit sind, an.

Ich beanspruche hiermit ausländische Prioritätsvorteile gemäss Abschnitt 35 der Zivilprozessordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 119 aller unten angegebenen Auslandsanmeldungen für ein Patent oder eine Erfindersurkunde, und habe auch alle Auslandsanmeldungen für ein Patent oder eine Erfindersurkunde nachstehend gekennzeichnet, die ein Anmeldedatum haben, das vor dem Anmeldedatum der Anmeldung liegt, für die Priorität beansprucht wird.

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

Processing a request to an operator service

the specification of which

(check one)

☐ is attached hereto.

☒ was filed on 28.06.2000 as

PCT international application

PCT Application No. PCT/DE00/02102

and was amended on (if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

German Language Declaration

Prior foreign applications
Priorität beansprucht

Priority Claimed

19929756.8

DE

29.06.1999

☒☐

(Number)
(Nummer)

(Country)
(Land)

(Day Month Year Filed)
(Tag Monat Jahr eingereicht)

Yes
Ja

No
Nein

(Number)
(Nummer)

(Country)
(Land)

(Day Month Year Filed)
(Tag Monat Jahr eingereicht)

9

☐

Yes
Ja

No
Nein

(Number)
(Nummer)

(Country)
(Land)

(Day Month Year Filed)
(Tag Monat Jahr eingereicht)

9

□

Yes
Ja

No
Nein

Ich beanspruche hiermit gemäss Absatz 35 der Zivilprozessordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 120, den Vorzug aller unten aufgeführten Anmeldungen und falls der Gegenstand aus jedem Anspruch dieser Anmeldung nicht in einer früheren amerikanischen Patentanmeldung laut dem ersten Paragraphen des Absatzes 35 der Zivilprozessordnung der Vereinigten Staaten, Paragraph 122 offenbart ist, erkenne ich gemäss Absatz 37, Bundesgesetzbuch, Paragraph 1.56(a) meine Pflicht zur Offenbarung von Informationen an, die zwischen dem Anmeldedatum der früheren Anmeldung und dem nationalen oder PCT internationalen Anmeldedatum dieser Anmeldung bekannt geworden sind.

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §122, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

PCT/DE00/02102

(Application Serial No.)
(Anmeldeseriennummer)

28.06.2000

(Filing Date D, M, Y)
(Anmeldedatum T, M, J)

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(Status)
(patientiert, anhängig,
aufgegeben)

pending

(Status)
(patented, pending,
abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)
(Anmeldeseriennummer)

(Filing Date D,M,Y)
(Anmeldedatum T, M; J)

(Status)
(patientiert, anhängig,
aufgeben)

(Status)
(patented, pending,
abandoned)

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass alle von mir in der vorliegenden Erklärung gemachten Angaben nach meinem besten Wissen und Gewissen der vollen Wahrheit entsprechen, und dass ich diese eidesstattliche Erklärung in Kenntnis dessen abgebe, dass wissentlich und vorsätzlich falsche Angaben gemäss Paragraph 1001, Absatz 18 der Zivilprozessordnung der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika mit Geldstrafe belegt und/oder Gefängnis bestraft werden koennen, und dass derartig wissentlich und vorsätzlich falsche Angaben die Gültigkeit der vorliegenden Patentanmeldung oder eines darauf erteilten Patentes gefährden können.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true, and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

German Language Declaration

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POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. (list name and registration number)

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Staatsangehörigkeit		Citizenship	
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Staatsangehörigkeit		Citizenship	
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